

The American crisis (No. 1) By the author of Common sense. [Boston] Sold opposite the court house Queen Street [1776].

The AMERICAN CRISIS. (No. I.)

[Dec. 19, 1776?]

By the Author of COMMON SENSE

[J. Paine]

THESE are the times that try men's souls: The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country but he that stands it NOW, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain, too cheap, we esteem too lightly:—'Tis dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to set a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as Freedom should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared, that she has a right (*not only to TAX*) but "to BIND us in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER," and if being *bound in that manner* is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even the expression is impious, for so unlimited a power can belong only to God.

Whether the Independence of the Continent was declared too soon, or delayed too long, I will not now enter into as an argument; my own simple opinion in that had it been eight months earlier, it would have been much better. We did not make a proper use of last winter, neither could we while we were in a dependent state. However, the fault, if it were one, was all our own; we have none to blame but ourselves. ^{*} But no great deal is lost yet; all that Howe has been doing for this month past is rather a ravage than a conquest which the spirit of the Jerseys a year ago would have quickly repulsed, and which time and a little resolution will soon recover, and which time and a little resolution will soon recover.

** " The present ", (meaning the last) "is worth an if rightly employed, but if lost, or neglected the will partake of the evil, and there is no that does not deserve who or what or where be will, that may be the means of sacrificing a to precious and ". Common Sense.*

I have as little superstition in me as any man living, but my secret opinion has ever been, and still is, that God almighty will not give up a people to military destruction, or leave them unsupportedly to perish, who had so earnestly and so repeatedly fought to avoid the calamities of war, by every decent method which seldom could invent. Neither have I so much of the is me, as to suppose, that

He has relinquished the government of the world, and given us up to the care of devils; and as *I do* not, I cannot see on what ground the king of Britain can look up to Heaven for help against us: A common murderer, a highwayman, or a house-breaker, has as good a pretence as he.

'Tis surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country. All nations and ages have been subject to them; Britain has trembled like an ague at the report of a French fleet of flat-bottomed boats; and in the fourteenth century the whole English army, after ravaging the kingdom of France, was driven back like men petrified with fear; and this brave exploit was performed by a few broken forces collected and headed by a woman, Joan of Arc, Would, that Heaven might inspire some Jersey maid to spirit up her countrymen, and save her fair fellow sufferers from ravage and ravishment! Yet panics, in some cases, have their uses; they produce as much good as hurt. Their duration is always short; the mind soon grows through them, and acquires a firmer habit than before. But their peculiar advantage is, that they are the touchstones of sincerity and hypocrisy, and bring things and men to light, which might otherwise have lain forever undiscovered. In fact, they have the same effect on secret traitors, which an imaginary apparition would upon a private murderer. They lift out the hidden thoughts of man, and hold them up in public to the world. Many a disguised Tory has lately shewn his head, that shall penitentially solemnize with curses the day on which Howe arrived upon the Delaware.

As I was with the troops at fort Lee, and marched with them to the edge of Pennsylvania, I am well acquainted with many circumstances, which those, who lived at a distance, know but little or nothing of. Our situation there was exceedingly cramped, the place being on a narrow neck of land between the North-river and the Hackinack. Our force was inconsiderable, being not one fourth so great as Howe could bring against us. We had no army at hand to have relieved the garrison, had we shut ourselves up and stood on the defence. Our ammunition, light artillery, and the best part of our stores had been removed upon the apprehension that Howe would endeavour to penetrate the Jerseys, in which case fort Lee could be of no use to us; for it must occur to every thinking man, whether in the army or not, that these kind of field forts are only for temporary purposes, and lasts in use no longer than the enemy directs his force against the particular object, which such force are raised to defend. Such was our situation and condition at fort Lee on the morning of the 20th of November, when an officer arrived with information, that the enemy with 200 boats had landed about seven or eight miles above: Major-General Green, who commanded the garrison, immediately ordered them under arms, and sent express to his Excellency General Washington, at the town of Hackinsack, distant by the way of the Perry fix miles. Our first object was to secure the bridge over the Hackinsack, which laid up the river between the enemy and or, about six miles from us and three from them. General Washington arrived in about three quarters of an hour, and marched at the head of the troops towards the bridge, which expected we should have a ; However they did not to

dispute it with us and the went over the bridge, the , except some which passed at a mill by a small creek, between the bridge and the , and made their way grounds The simple object was to being of of the , and to march them on they could by the Jersey or Pennsylvania militis, to as to be to make a stand. We said four days at Newark, collected in our out posts with fame of the Jersey militia, and marched out twice to meet the enemy on information of their being advancing, though our numbers were greatly inferior to theirs. Howe, in my little opinion, committed a great error in general ship, in not throwing a body of forces off from Staten. If and through Amboy, by which means he might have seized all our stores at Brunswick, and intercepted our march into Pennsylvania. But, if we believe the power of hell to be limited, we must likewise believe that their agents are under some providential controul.

I shall not now attempt to give all the particulars of our retreat to the Delaware, suffice it for the present to say, that both officers and men, though greatly harassed and fatigued, frequently without self, covering or provision, the inevitable consequences of a long retreat, bore it with a manly and martial spirit. All their wishes were one, which was, that the country would turn out and help them to drive the enemy back. Voltaire has remarked, that king William never appeared to full advantage but in difficulties and in action; the same remark may be made on General Washington for the character fits him. There is a natural fannels in some minds which cannot be unlocked by trifles, but which, when unlocked discovers a cabinet of fortitude, and I reckon it among those kind of public blessing, which we do not immediately fee, that God hath blest him with uninterrupted health, and gives him a mind that can even flourish upon care.

I shall conclude this paper with some miscellaneous remarks on the slate of our affairs; and shall begin with asking the following question, Why is it that the enemy hath left the New England provinces, and made those middle once the fear of war? The answer is easy, New England is not infested with Tories, and we are. I have been under in raising the cry against these men, and used numberless arguments to shew them their danger, but it without do to sacrifice a world to either their folly or . The period is now arrived, in which either they or we must change our sentiments, or one or both must fall. And what is a Tory? Good GOD! what is he? I should not be afraid to go with a hundred Whigs against a thousand Tories, were they to attempt to get into arms. Every Tory is a coward, for a servile, slavish, self-interested fear is the foundation of Toryism; and a man under such influence, though he may be cruel, never can be brave.

But before the line of irrecoverable separation be drawn between us, let us reason the matter together: Your conduct is an invitation to the enemy, yet not one in a thousand of you has heart enough to join him. Howe is as much deceived by you as the American cause is injured by you. He expects you will all take up arms, and flock to his standard with muskets on your shoulders, Your

opinions are of no use to him, unless you support him personally; for 'tis soldiers, and not Tories, that he wants.

I once felt all that kind of anger, which a man ought to feel, against the mean principles that are held by the Tories. A noted one, who kept a tavern at Amboy, was standing at his door, with as pretty a child in his hand, about eight or nine years old, as most I ever saw, and after speaking his mind as freely as he thought was prudent, finished with this unfartherly expression, "*Well! give me peace in my day.*" Not a man lives on the Continent but fully believes that a separation must some time or other finally take place, and a generous parent would have said, "*If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace;*" and this single reflection, well applied, is sufficient to awaken every man to duty. Not a place upon earth might be so happy as America. Her situation is remote from all the wrangling world, and she has nothing to do but to trade with them. A man may easily distinguish in himself between temper and principle, and I am as confident, as I am that God governs the world, that America will never be happy till she gets clear of foreign dominion. Wars, without ceasing, will break out till that period arrives, and the Continent must in the end be conquerors; for, though the flame of liberty may sometimes cease to shine, the coal never can expire.

America did not, nor does not, want force; but she wanted a proper application of that force. Wisdom is not the purchase of a day, and it is no wonder that we should err at first setting off. From an excess of tenderness, we were unwilling to raise an army, and trusted our cause to the temporary defence of a well meaning militia. A summers experience has now taught us better, yet with those troops, while they were collected, we were able to set bounds to the progress of the enemy, and, thank God! if they are again assembling. I always considered a militia as the best troops in the world for a sudden exertion, but they will not do for a long campaign. How, it is probable, will make an attempt on this city; should he fail on this side the Delaware, he is ruined; if he succeeds, our cause is not ruined. He makes all on his side against a part on ours; admitting he succeeds, the consequence will be, that armies from both ends of the Continent will march to assist their suffering friends in the middle States; for he cannot go every where, it is impossible. I consider Howe as the greatest enemy the Tories have; he is bringing a war into their country, which, had it not been for him and partly for themselves, they had been clear of. Should he now be expelled, I wish, with all the devotion of a Christian, that the names of Whig and Tory may never more be mentioned; but should the Tories give him encouragement to come, a gauge of sorrow draw forth the fear of comparison nothing can reach the heart that is fled with prejudice.

Quitting this class of men, I turn with the warm ardour of a friend to those who have nobly stood yet determined to stand the matter out; I call not upon a few, but upon all; not on THIS state or THAT truth but on EVERY state; up and help us; lay your shoulders to the wheel; better have too much

force than too little, when so great an object is at stake. Let it be told to the future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, come forth to meet and to repulse it. Say not, that thousands are gone, turn out your tens of thousands; throw not the bur hen of the day upon Providence, but "*Shew your faith by your works,*" that God may bless you. It matters not where you live, or what rank of life you hold, the evil or the blessing will reach you all. The far and the near, the home counties and the back, the rich and the poor, shall suffer or rejoice alike. The heart that feels not now, is dead: The blood of his children shall curse his cowardice, who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole, and made *them* happy. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death. My own line of reasoning is to myself as strait and clear as a ray of light. Not all the treasures of the world, is far as I believe, could have induced me to support an offensive war, for I think it murder; But if a thief break into my house, burn and destroy my property, and kill or threaten to kill me, or those that are in it, and to "bind me in all cases whatsoever," to his absolute will, am I to suffer it? What signifies it to me, whether he who does it, is a king) or a common man; my countryman or not my countryman; whether it is done by an individual villain, or an army of them? If we reason to the root of things we shall find no difference; neither can any just cause be assigned why we should punish in the one case, and pardon in the other. Let them call me rebel, and welcome, I feel no concern from it; but I should suffer the misery of devils, were I to make a whore of my soul by swearing allegiance to one, whose character is that of a , stupid, stubborn, worthless, brutish man. I conceive likewise a horrid idea in receiving mercy from a being, who as the last day shall be shrieking to the rocks and mountains to cover him, and fleeing with terror from the orphan, the widow and the slain of America.

There are cases which cannot be overdone by language, and this is one. There are persons too who see not the full extent of the evil that threatens them; they solace themselves with hopes that the enemy, if they succeed, will be merciful. It is the madness of folly to expect mercy from those who have refused to do justice; and even mercy, where conquest is the object, is only a trick of war; The cunning of the fox is as murderous as the violence of the whose, and we ought to guard equally against both. Howe's first object is partly by threats and partly by promises, to terrify or seduce the people to deliver up their arms, and receive mercy. The ministry recommended the same plan to Gage, and this is what the Tories call making their peace; "*a peace which passeth all understanding*" indeed A peace which would be the immediate forerunner of a worse ruin than any we have yet thought of. Yet men of Pennsylvania, do reason upon those things? Were the back counties to give up their aims, they would fall an easy prey to the Indians, who are all armed: This perhaps is what some Tories would not be sorry for. Were the home counties to deliver up their arms, they would

be exposed to the resentment of the back counties, who would then have it in their power to their defection at pleasure—And were any one State to give up its arms, that State must be garrisoned by all Howe's army of Britons and Hassians to preserve it from the anger of the rest. Mutual fear is a principal link in the chain of mutual love, and woe be to that State that breaks the compact Howe is mercifully inviting you to barbarous , and men must be either rogues or fools that will not see it. I dwell not upon the vapours of imagination; I bring reason to your ears; and in language are plain as A, B, C; hold up truth to your eyes.

I thank God that I fear not. I see no real cause for fear. I know one situation well, and can see the way out of it. While our army was collected, Howe dared not risk a battle, and it is not credit to him that he decamped from the White Plains, and waited a mean opportunity to ravage the defenceless Jerseys; but it is great credit to us, that, with an handful of men, we sustained an orderly retreat for near an hundred miles? brought off our ammunition, all our field pieces, the greatest part of our stores, and had four rivers to pass. None can say that our retreat was precipitate, for we were near three weeks in performing it, that the country might have time to come in. Twice we marched back to meet the enemy and remained out till dark. The sign of fear was not seen in our camp, and had not some of the cowardly and disaffected inhabitants spread false alarms through the country, the Jerseys had never been ravaged. Once more we are again collected and collecting; our new army at both ends of the continent recruiting fast, and we shall be able to open the next campaign with sixty thousand men; well armed & cloathed. This is our situation, and who will may know it. By perseverance and fortitude have the prospect of a glorious issue, by cowardice and the sad choice of a variety of evils— a ravaged country—a depopulated city—habituations without safety, and slavery without hope—our homes turned into barracks and , and a future race to provide for whose fathers with all doubt of. Look on this picture, and weep over it and if there yet remains one thoughtless which who believes it not, let be if unlamented.

Sold opposite the Court-House, *Queen Street*.